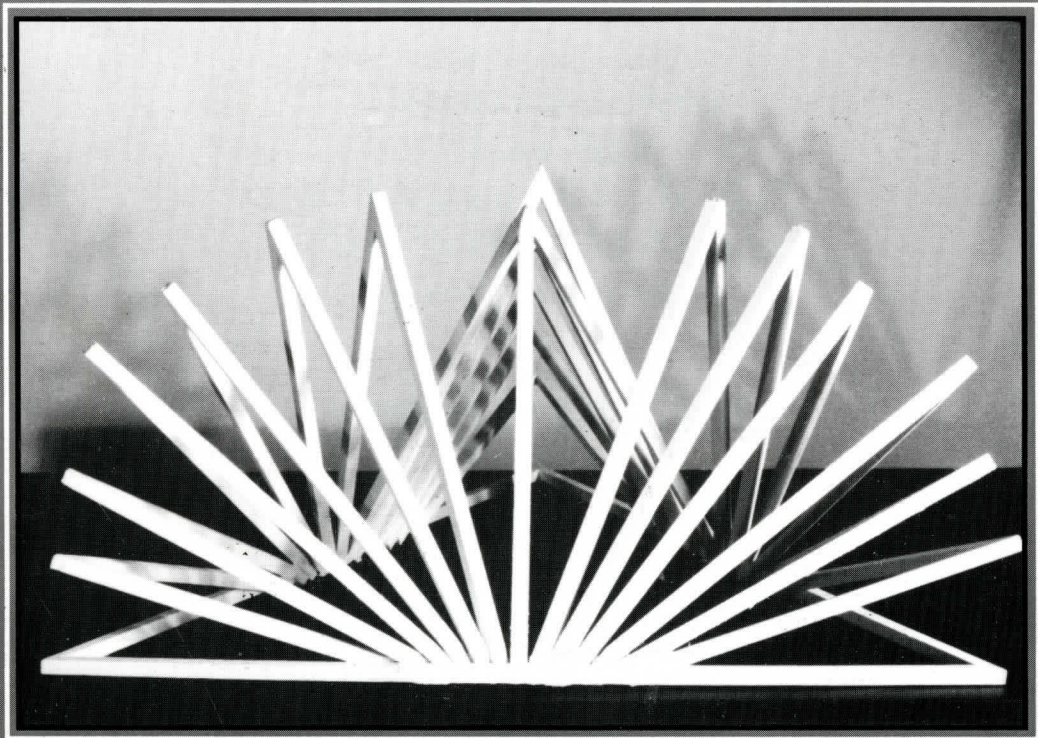


PHOENIX



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1866

1866

Black Butterfly

Moving through the world around you, touching God's sunlit sky,
More beautiful than all creation, God's own Black Butterfly.
Being chased by admirers of variety and flair, always reaching to touch
you as you escape in thin air.

So many lives have touched yours, many souls have passed you by
Just when they thought you were captured, you were gone Black
Butterfly.

Love has paved a way for you, a happiness painted gold,
Embracing you with healthy love, as your illusiveness takes hold.

Black Butterfly, Black Butterfly, kissing nature's flowers

Thank you for just this moment, this second, this hour.

Now that you have focused before me, and gave my life some grace,
Please do not leave Black Butterfly, Though you must have your space.

I know that you have your work to do, even though I do not know why,
Could it be that God has something special for you, that is just for
butterflies?

How deeply we have grown to love you,

Inspiration mere words do not say.

How they reach out to control you,

And how you just fly away.

Are you searching for a special love?

How about a ribbon in the sky?

Or are you just taking flight,

Just because you can fly?

Black Butterfly, Black Butterfly.

Beauty unspoken of,

The glory in knowing these moments

In a time when we both need love.

Veronica Pearcey

I think it rains for a reason.
Drip, drop, drip, drop.
Droplets follow each other
their pace changes with time.
A torrential rain.
An April shower.
A tantrum's tears.

Lisa Waldron

Spring

The man walked along the sidewalk, nodding and smiling to the strangers he passed. He stopped at a corner before crossing the street, raised his face to the sun, and breathed a contented sigh. He held his body still for a moment, then let out his breath in a rush of air and opened his eyes with a smile and a slight shake of his head, as if he were attempting to emerge from a dream.

He was painstakingly dressed in worn clothes, as old men often are. He carried himself carefully, almost primly. He knew he was an anonymous old man in the eyes of the world, but he expected as much and had long since come to accept it.

Old man or not, today he had a particular lightness in his step. Spring was just beginning to work her magic and all around him the city of New York was alive with a bustle of happy faces.

When he breathed deeply he could detect the smell of Nature herself above the distinct scent of roasted peanuts and exhaust fumes that was the smell of the City. The smell of Nature, of life, was stronger in some places than in others. At times he would lose the smell altogether, only to find it again in a doorway or down a side street. He lingered in these places as long as he could, and then moved on slowly, testing the air as he went.

The man, still on the corner, sniffed the air once more. Satisfied, he smiled and turned down the street to his left, following the smell of Nature across the City as if it were a trail of perfume left by a beautiful and mysterious lady.

Laura Hudson



Untitled *Lorraine Groves*

Breakin it Down

I wanna be me but I can't.
Trapped by boundaries
not of my making.

Am I to be a hairstyle,
A color in a crayon box
or just another cause?

I wanna be me, at last
A person with a history
but not limited to the
past.

I wanna be me. I wanna be
free!

Kathleen M. Jones

Only You

I don't understand why you are so afraid to love,
When it is what everyone is dreaming of.
When will you be able to open your heart,
And give this love its rightful start?
Are you that blind that you cannot see,
That the only one who loves you is simply - me?
I cannot make you love me, but I can let you know,
That if you do love me, I'll never let you go.
I hope you realize this love is true,
And the one I want, is only you.

Susan Marie Paprota

Un coquí en New Rochelle

Durante la noche fresca de New Rochelle
se oye un canto desconocido para el vecino:
un canto que no consiste en muchas palabras,
mas en música exquisita para su oído.

Llegan las noches frías del duro invierno
y ese canto sigue caliente como el verano:
mientras el frío hiela tantos anhelos,
yo siento el calor sabroso de mi Fajardo.

!Y esto es en New Rochelle! Que será en Puerto Rico,
donde ese canto alegra las noches de sus campos?
La gente duerme con su canto de amor callado,
y se despierta con el gallo y su coro amigo.
No hay nada como el coquí en tierra de Gosén,
donde grita: "Quiero compartir mi canto de amor,"
por today partes su mensaje llega al corazón.
!Canta, coquí, mil veces en New Rochelle!

Al you recordar las noches de mi inocencia,
recuerdo el canto del trovador y de su guitarra;
también las palmas, movidas por la fresca brisa
del majestuoso Atlántico, qui baila y canta.

Recuerdo las horas bravas del meliodía
cuando el sol y la gente dan alegría,
pues es el coquí el elixir del revivir,
el amor por Puerto Rico, por mi país.

Suzannette Lebrón

One Day, Then Another

After the funeral was over, after everyone had left, after the condolences, after all the amenities: fried chicken, potato-salad, and enough spirits to float a small vessel--she stepped out into the fading September sun--and I tagged along, not knowing what else to do.

The funeral was for my brother, Evan. He would have been twenty-nine in several days--plans were made for a party--then suddenly he was gone. And the woman, who at eighteen was only a child, one who hadn't spoken in three days, one who stood huddled like a mummy during and after ceremony, at whose side I now walked, was his wife, Kallie.

I did not know her, and had spoken to her only once, long distance, after their wedding. I'd been away at school; it was finals, so I couldn't leave. But Evan (who was ten years my senior), had often written me of her, so that she wasn't a complete stranger. Evan had been a professor of English, and she was his favorite student. From his letters I knew, probably, even before he, that he loved her. Once he even expressed the hope that I might find someone like her to love.

Evan was my only brother, and my only kinsman, now there was only this girl dressed for mourning. A girl who pulled me into her steps, into her silence, a girl who hadn't acknowledged my presence, yet needed me as much as I needed her.

We walked for hours, no place in particular, walked till the sun was lost in the stars and kept moving through the Autumn chill that had severed the trees of their leaves and the street of its noise. The only sounds other than an occasional passing car were in faint echoes of our steps turning over and over, reaching one corner then the next, till finally, and without trying, we were in front of her door.

There she waited, staring inside the window, as if for some sign of a life that didn't exist; but there was only the darkness, the emptiness that was felt from where she stood. Then she leaned against a fence, and I watched her as if it was for the first time.

Kallie was dark, so dark, that from a short distance seemed almost featureless, like one of those African carvings; and as one neared, one saw skin that was as smooth as marble and as soft and scented as ripened fruit, filled with the mappings of her ancestors: the African nose and mouth, eyes black as berries, large as almonds and hair which usually fell woolenly across her shoulders now tied in an ebony scarf made from the same cotton material as her dress, a dress which covered, but couldn't conceal the lines of life lingering within it.

And she was tall, and as fluid as water, and like water her limbs stretched and pooled. And I could imagine my brother diving and disappearing in her darkening expanse.

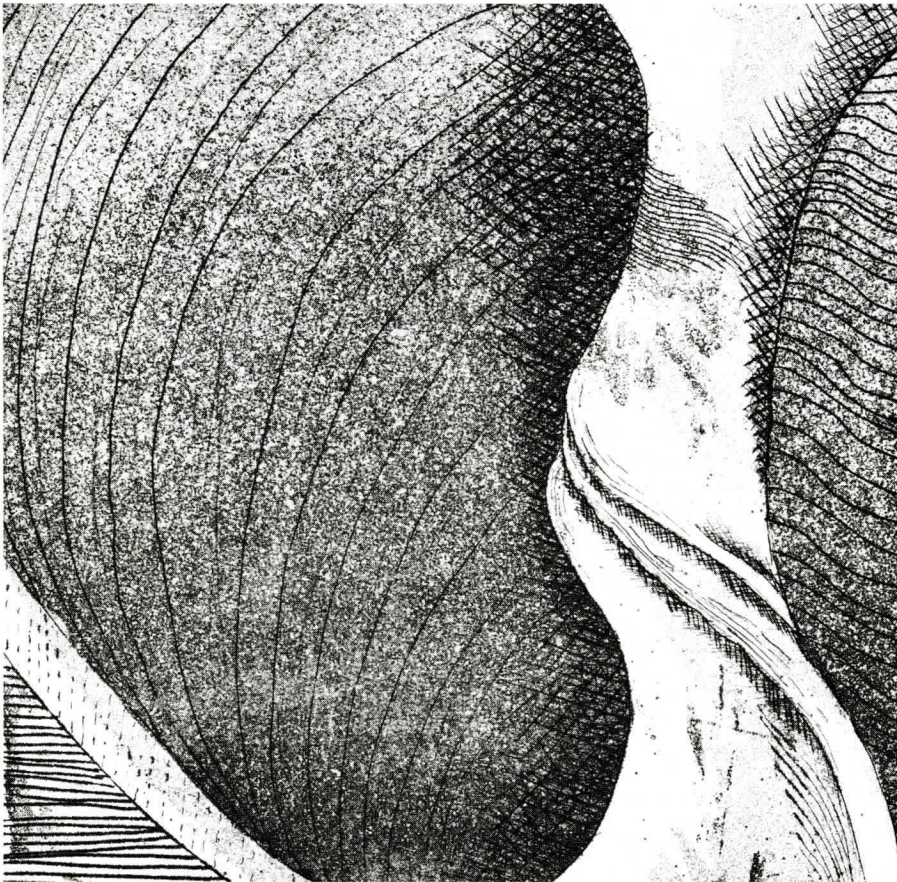
They had been like flowers, whose earlier than usual spring now lay buried under an even earlier frost. And it wasn't fair. So brief was their love--my eyes began to fill with tears--was it because they cheated or was it the wind whipping through the street? Turning, she saw me; then screaming as if a knife had been plunged into her heart, she ran inside and locked the door. I banged, calling her name, but she didn't answer. And I was a little afraid to bang and call any louder because it was her grief and she had a right to spend it as she pleased. But I was even more afraid of what she might do if I stopped.

Then the lock clicked back and I went inside. She hadn't turned on the lights, but I could see her seated in front of a window; it framed her like an ebony silhouette, and as I approached, partly to see how she was, partly to prove she was real, I knew for the first time beauty could exist as such sorrow.

A hand extended, but the darkness was so immense that for a moment it just hung there, as if waiting for the rest of itself to form. Then the hand found mine, but it wasn't hers. Then she shrieked, and was suddenly standing. Then the roughness of the hand I held receded into the softness of her own, and the rest of her followed. The night was long; in it we were warm and happy and we didn't know why and we didn't care.

We stood, looking out the window; we stood there for hours; we stood there like children, counting the stars till they all flickered and gathered into one enormous sun.

Orlando Warren



Home Lorraine Groves

The Woods

I enter under the canopy
and within an instant
my mind and soul
are aware of the
peace and serenity
found there.

The canopy of trees above
become the steeple,
and the tree stump
before me becomes
my altar.

God's amazing power
and presence is felt,
as the harsh sounds of
modern culture
are repalced by the
primitive and natural
sounds
of the creator's wonderful
masterpiece.

With no windows to
shut out the sun's rays
and no walls to block
the cool breezes blowing
the experience I feel
is overwhelming.

My soul seems to transcend
this time and place as I
begin to comprehend the
world and my place in it.

I find it difficult to
tear myself away and I
do so knowing that I
have left part of me
behind.

To come to this place
is to embark on a pilgrimage
as religious have done
throughout the ages
to their great
places of worship.

I leave knowing I
will be back again to
experience the Diving Being
with such amazing intimacy
and closeness.

Patti Devlin

Seeking

boom, boom, boom
I hear it but I do not understand.
boom, boom, boom
what is it about that sound?
boom, boom, boom
It is the sound of drums.
boom, boom, boom
Someone said it is the sound of drums
from the Motherland.
boom, boom, boom
The Motherland?
boom, boom, boom
boom, boom, boom!
Oh yes, yes I understand the
Motherland. It is that place on the map
that everyone can not stand!
boom, boom, boom
Quick, quick get me a book so I can
understand.
boom, boom, boom
Oh! It is that place where slaves came
from once upon a time. Yes, Negro
slaves from that AFRICAN land.
Oh yes, I have it, listen as I
read this PARAGRAPH now.
BOOM,BOOM,BOOM
I still do not understand!

Audra E. Fobbs

5:36 am part one

the dawn greets the sunflowers
who turn around to face it
as it rises above the small town

only the breadtrucks and morning diskjockeys
really are around enough to notice
a sunrise regularly

its beauty a true sight of awe
but I can only name four to my witnessing
those dappled sky births-
that emerge from the bleakest black of death
to the newborn shades of pale mauve and rosed pinks
mother earth folds back the night sky once more
for another twelve or so hours

Such a vision,
and appropriate to all viewing ages
with a G rating for sure,
but one can only guess that sunsets are shown
at a convenient time slot.

A. Beal

5:36 am part two

I can remember a sunrise
that Block Island summer of 1989.
(where I slept on that red lumpy couch)
those big bay windows made that an even trade.

As day's light filled them at 5:36am
standard and eastern time
no curtains by the way
and blinded the lids of my shut eyes.

I opened them to see the night's sky chased
away into the corners of mother earth
by gentle but eager golden pink fingertips of light.
waltzing across the horizon.
my eyes never leave the adapting sky.

5:36...

5:37...

5:38...

.....rustle, rustle, crunch, snap!
as a baby deer follows its mother
to find breakfast among the juicy leaves they now can see.
I guess it's just another day.

A. Beal

Are You Concerned

This poem is in memory of my friend Stephen M. Wilber, LCpl who, along with his friends, Doc and Lucas, wrote this poem while over in Saudi. He passed away in November of 1991 and I want him to know that his memory still carries on everyday.

*Love,
Jennifer O'Neill*

"Doesn't it really concern you?"
You sit at home and watch TV,
you sip a refreshing cold ice tea.
The news comes on, then you hear,
the battle report of a casualty bier.

Then you view a far-off land
where men are dying in the sand.
A frown appears across your face,
you're tired of hearing about this place.

Stop and think for a moment or two,
"Doesn't it really concern you?"

It's great to be alive and free,
and we're out here fighting for your liberty.
Grunts who live in filth and slime,
how can we do it all the time?
Why, indeed, should we really care,
if it's a war they will not share?

You lucky guy, you giggle and sneer
because you have never really known fear.
But Marines over here face death every day,
for Freedom and the American Way.

Though tired and sick, we continue to fight,
work all day, stand guard all night.
We long for home, to see a loved one,
but we can't quit until the job is done.

The days are hot and nights are too,
what wonders your iced tea would do.
We dream of that and sizzling steaks,
then the nightmare shouts, "We've got a job to take."

Some will be heroes because they were lucky and
brave, others will just get a wreath on their graves.

Stop and think for a moment or two,
"Doesn't it really concern you?"



Where Are We Going? *Chris Kozlowski*

The End

She stood before him,
Outstretched arms ending in closed-cupped hands.
His gaze followed the line of her body,
From her hollow eyes down to her filled hands.
Gently, those hands opened to reveal these three:
A white dove, a white pearl, a white rose.
As he watched
The white dove flew to the sky,
The white pearl crumbled to dust,
The white rose turned to black.
As he watched
She simply faded away
Her place marked only
By his tear.

Lisa Nicoletti

Suburban Collegiate

she is dressed in a big bulky blue sweater
that casually calls her unavailable state

yet her eyes glow purple from the reflect
of that A&P 99 cent lipstick shine

"how can it be that the world is so shallow
da de da de da de?" She wonders as she wanders

located in the midst of this flashing galleria
world her thoughts can not help but to be

of philosophy, lost dreams and her need to pee

continuing her tour, she stops at a window
gazes down 8 stories to Canal street

notices the city working its game old
poetic miracle, then turns to quickly

enter the door marked "little women"

Heather Dominick

The Elephant

"Johnny?"

"What?"

"Where ya from?"

"South Carolina. You?"

"Vah'ginia, home of the best lookin' belles in th' Confederacy."

"I beg to diffah. South Carolina has some pretty fine lookin' beauties too."

"They may be fine lookin', but nothin' compares ta these heah in Vah'ginia."

Johnny?"

"Yeah?"

"Ya ev' seen th' elephant?"

"Nah."

"Ya 'fraid 'bout seein' 'em when ya do?"

"Course not. What's to be afraid of? We're gonna whip them Yanks for sure."

"Course we is."

"What about you? You ever seen the elephant?"

"Hell, lots a times. Ev' time they all rode th' othah way wid their tails 'tween their legs cryin'."

Seeing the milky color on Lewis's face while they were talking about the elephant made me wonder if he is just as afraid as I am about seeing the Yankees in battle. Being a Southern Army Scout for Wade Hampton's Legion has its disadvantages. For one, we are the ones who really risk our lives. More so than the regular cavalry, because we are the ones who hunt for the Yankees and find out exactly what they are planning on doing. I haven't been in the outfit as long as Lewis, so I am new at this, but I go about it hoping that the next day will not bring fighting.

We are about thirty miles outside of Washington and sometimes under the cover of night a bunch of us ride into the city to find out what is happening. We have to be careful that no one catches us or it could mean our death.

Each night I go to sleep on my Army surplus cot underneath the rough pine green wool blanket they gave us. The bugs are horrendous and when I arise in the morning I have welts on my body from the bites. I can't sleep. I lie wondering what will happen to me. Each night when I say my prayers it's always that children's prayer, the one that starts with, "Now I lay me down to sleep. . ." When I get to the part that says, "If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take," I close my eyes hoping that for many years to come that does not happen. I lie scared to death of being shot and seeing men I live with, both the officers above me and the enlisted men below, in camp dying as the Yankees kill them. I spend the sleepless nights staring at the roof of my tent, wanting to be back home along the Ashley where I would go fishing with Tom; one of the little nigger boys. How I wanted to be back there attending the balls that my mother would throw for us on our birthdays and at Christmas.

In my sleep my ears start an incessant ringing and pounding. The guns are

booming all around. There is a Yankee soldier approaching, who is just a boy, and I know that I must kill him to survive. I aim my pistol at him, cock the hammer and fire; it is a short load and goes off in my hand. He is getting nearer, I try to use my saber but my arm won't move. It is stinging from the after-effects of the pistol.

"Help!" I scream, "Help!"

I leap out of my blanket hitting my head on the roof of the white canvas tent. I am shivering, yet I sweat out all the water in my system.

"What's wrong, Johnny?"

"Nothin'," I sit back on my cot. "Just a bad dream."

"Oh, I thought you was gonna die."

"Nah, I'm fine."

The bugler's reveille sounded as I was putting on my polished boots that Jeff Davis supplies for us all. I finish getting on my dusty gray uniform that is beginning to blacken from wear and the dust of the road and fired gun powder.

When I first came here I tried to keep it so neat and clean, but it became useless so I gave up. The regiment is scheduled to have musket drills today, that is if we don't go into battle or move. Lewis and I will probably end up scouting for most of the day to see what is happening with the Yankees, and when they plan to move out.

As I walk out of my tent I hear someone moaning. I move toward the sound to see Private Albert Smith grabbing his stomach in dire agony. Smith's eighteen, just two years younger than me and he is facing this God-awful pain alone. I know what is wrong with him, just by how he looks: the Screamers. So far seven people in our camp have died of the Screamers and Albert might likely be eight. Eight who have died a slow painful death without ever having seen the Elephant. That is, unless you consider this their elephant.

I believe that if I had to die in this war I would rather be shot by some unknown Yankee than to come down with the Screamers.

We had a quiet day, most of the Yanks were either parading in their capitol or drilling outside of the city. We could tell, however, just by riding around the city that something is going to happen.

I sit in the dimly lit tent on this hot July seventeenth eve trying to compose a letter home that makes this camp and the prospect of battle sound so great. . .

July 1861

Dear Mother and Father,

Things are going rather slow around here. We are drilling daily to prepare us on how to use our weapons when we go into battle. Everyday the man that I share my tent with and I go out scouting to see what the Yankees are doing, and so far we have seen nothing. It is one of the most dangerous jobs in the Army and we have to be careful that we are not seen when we go to Wasington, so we usually stay to the outskirts where we can see what their Army is doing. It gets boring around here seeing and doing the same thing day after day, but it passes time.

Seven people I know of have died of dysentery and at least one person in camp at present has it. It's an awful way to die, and not very gallant.

On the brighter side, Colonel Hampton says that we should be engaging in battle

soon, between what we have seen and how things look so far at this time. He says that it will be at a place called Bull Run Creek near Manassas. From what they say we are going to beat the Yankees in one big battle and that this will be it.

I have a good friend here named Lewis Scott from about fifty miles from here. We are Scouts together and spend the greater part of our time on the trail arguing about Virginia and South Carolina belles and which ones are prettier. To me Lewis seems kind of like a ladies man, but who knows here.

Well I must close this letter, mess call. It's not the best food, usually Hardtack and something to drink, but it is food and it helps us to survive.

Give my regards to everyone.

Love always,
John

It is so hard trying to make the camp seem exciting when every word that I write is a lie. I can't tell my parents how I really feel because my father expects me to be so brave and give the elephant the fighting Jones spirit and whip them all. That is why I joined the Militia in the first place, to satisfy him when I really hate fighting. Now here I am fighting for my homeland, scared of dying, for him. Then if my mother ever knew how I really felt she would try to have me discharged and I would feel like a yellow-bellied coward. I also had to lie about Lewis in some part; we don't really talk that much on the road, a little once in a while, but not really. Normally at camp I write in my journal or read. I had to do it because Mother was always afraid that I wouldn't have any "friends". Yet what friends do we have at a battle camp? What friends we do make end up dying in front of our very eyes. I hate lying to my parents but it has to be done. They want me to be so brave, when really I am scared.

It has been a few days now and my fears have been growing more intense about dying in battle. After rides with Lewis we have seen that the Yankees plan on heading toward Richmond and that we must stop them. From what Colonel Hampton says we will take Washington in an effort to win the war. From what I have seen the battle will take place at Bull Run Creek like I wrote my parents. We leave at dawn on a long and frightening ride to the hands of death at the sight of the elephant.

Everyone in the camp is excited about finally going into battle, that is everyone but me. Lewis is even quiet, which is unbelievable for him.

"Johnny?"

"Yeah."

"If I die tomorrah, will ya send this here note to ma folks back home?"

"Sure Lewis, but why?"

"I want them to know how I feel 'bout this here battle. But mind you, not unless I die or for that mattah when evah that day comes, unless I tell ya else."

"Lewis?"

"Yeah, Johnny?"

"Ya scared?"

"Yeah, Johnny, I am scared. What 'bout you?"

"Hell, I've been scared evah since I joined this here God-foresaken outfit."

"But before ya said that ya weren't."

"Well a fellah can lie can't he? I am scared a dyin' to some Yankee ball or bayonet, and I'm scared a livin' and seein' the men I know and live with die around me 'cause I can't save them. I feel like a coward, but I wonder how many othah people feel the same way I do, but just won't admit it."

"Before I thought this war was so great until now that I know that we're actually gonna fight 'em. I'm scared of dyin' too. Hell I'm only twenty years old, and so far I've seen eight people die of th' Screammers and I know that I don't want ta get 'em. And I sure as hell don't want to be shot by no ball or stabbed by no bayonet for that mattah. I have too much to live for. I can't die now. Not yet."

Last night I lay half asleep frightened to death about what the coming day would bring. I dreamed of men dying agonizing deaths, screaming my name, "Johnny, Johnny, help me. Help me Johnny!" No matter how hard I tried, I could not do a thing to help them, and they all died carrying those words to their graves.

"Company March!"

In the foreground I can see senators, congressmen and their families picnicking, watching the battle. How can they watch the death and destruction being caused? They might never have seen a battle, but do they really want to watch people die?

There is a man riding toward me, saber in hand. I veer to the right to avoid him. The cannons are laying ball all over the place and you never know exactly where the next one is going to land as you pray it is nowhere near you. I hear the drummers beating and buglers blowing the Cavalry advance. Someone is yelling Black Horse or something.

I survived Bull Run, but others weren't as lucky as myself. Lewis died, shot in the head by a Yankee Sharpshooter. We won this battle, but did we really? I know now that this is going to be a long war with many killed around me. I have to get used to it, but I don't think that I ever can.

I have seen the elephant and it scares me more now than it did before. I am too young to die.

Heather L. Archibald



Untitled *Emily Gauthier*

Caverns of the Mind

I close my eyes
and peer through the
musty, dank, cob-webbed
caverns of the
recesses of my mind.

Some are filled
with the brilliance
of afternoon sunshine
and glowing with
enormous treasure chests
filled with the most
glorious memories.

Other are stormy and
turbulent like the
horizon as the thunderous
storm clouds approach.

Scaring me with their
amazing power and intensity
and awing me with their
eerie and surreal beauty.

It is frightening to witness
such severe destruction amongst
memories so precious and dear
to my divided heart.

Patti Devlin

Life is life
so let me live mine.

So it's different from yours,
which is perfectly fine.

Don't try to control me,
You'll never succeed.

Stop telling me I'm wrong-
It's my own life that I must lead.

I was perfection when I was little,
You had to know it wouldn't last.

Those days are gone-
I guess I grew up fast.

I'll make my mistakes,
Let me learn

You've had your chance,
Now it's my turn.

Because, you see, life is life,
Just let me live mine.

Victoria Coudray

White vs. Black
Black vs. White
Come on, people, do you
Really have to fight?

Wrong vs. Right
Right vs. Wrong
It doesn't matter
Let's just get along.
Knife vs. Knife
Truth vs. Lies
It won't matter
Cause we all will die

White vs. Black
Black vs. White
Let's get together
Cause it's time to unite

Peace and love
Harmony and Hope
We don't want racism
We just can't cope

No one is better
No one is worse
We were put here to
Share this earth.

*Doris Perez and
High School Friends*

My Big Guy

Fear of the unknown had conquered me; it trapped my mind,
and made it wild with worries.
Can you imagine what I suffered?
Just a young woman, faced with the possibility of her father's
death,
and being so far away at the time.
But I couldn't stay away.
I had to see you.
If something happened, and I wasn't there, I couldn't live
with myself.
So I sat through the three hour train ride.
Alone.
Thinking crazy thoughts like death.
If I ever lost you, my father, my "Big Guy," I couldn't exist.
I'd be alive, but I wouldn't be truly living.
Especially if I lost you at this time in my life.
I have so many things to do to make you proud of me.
It hurts me terribly to write these words, but I have to tell you.
I just want you to know how much I appreciate and love you,
dad,
My Big Guy.

Susan Paprota

Ternura - Tenderness

Sentí tu mano acariciar
I felt your hand caressing
mis mejillas:
my cheeks:
el calor de tu mano
the warmth your hand transmits
estremécíome.
made me tremble.
Pose mi mano sobre la tuya:
I posed my hand over yours:
el calor aumentó.
The warmth increased.
Al cerrar nuestros ojos, todo
When we closed our eyes, everything
tornósenos en arco iris.
turned to rainbows.
Quede aprisionada en tu
I remained captive inside your
caricia,
caress,
por tu ternura.
by your tenderness.

Suzannette Lebrón

To Jeanne

Thou hath a soul of the fairest kind,
Possessing a witty and truthful mind.
As industrious hands produce poetry of beauty,
Expanding through purple horizons briskly.
Your inner voice tinkles melodiously,
And the beauty of it beams warmly.

Linda Mah

Conform To the Norm

"Come to the polls and vote for me.
I won't save your lives but I'll give you drugs free.
It won't stop the bloodshed in the streets,
but when you're high, life seems sweet."
He didn't have money to get a degree,
so Uncle Sam said, "Come to me."
"Fight across the water for the Red, White, and Blue. . ."
Missing in action, age 22.

Conform to the Norm,
Don't fight the powers that be.
Straighten your hair, bleach your mind. . .
Be just like me.
Remember Martin? Remember Malcolm?
They didn't fit the form.
Come in from the storm. . .
Conform to the Norm.

They torched her building for insurance money.
Turning tricks by the age of twenty.
Losing weight, what could it be?
D.O.A./A.I.D.
Everyday it's in the news.
"A woman has the right to choose. . ."
Who will win, who will lose?
The fetus dies without a clue.

Conform to the Norm.
Don't stand up and fight.
Huey's gone, just move on,
come into the light.
Chesamard and Davis have nothing more to say.
Forget the pain and all the strain,
and all the values you have gained.
Let all the bloodshed be in vain. . .
Conform to the Norm.

Arva Q. Blackwood



Youth of Today *Chris Kozlowski*

Generations

She has her father's eyes
her mother's laugh
Grandmother's firey temper
and her great-granddaddy's smile

Genetics?
X and Y chromosomes?
fate vs. hereditary?

do they pass it all down to us?
like heirloom jewelry and real estate?

Are we only what our genes provide
or are we free to be ourselves?
Having our eyes, laugh, temper, and smile all to ourselves?

A. Beal

The Mask

Changing for a faceless shadow.
Crying tears no one sees.
Laughing with the wind and
breathing with no heart.
Loving a dream which will
never happen.
Wanting desperately a chance
for being.
Finding no place to rest the hurt.

Debbie Hoover

Through the Eyes of Our Friends

We're constantly changing,
our lives growing in ways
we never could have expected.

Because we are always changing
we can only see ourselves
through the eyes of our friends.

Forever reaching out in new directions
that sometimes are surprising.

For that, we are always learning-
and it is through our friends
that we learn to love ourselves.

But a friend is always aware
that as their world changes,
so, too, does yours.

And because we're only human
we learn what it means
to be ourselves completely
through the caring of our friends.

So, wherever life may lead us-
I know we'll always be,
the same wonderful friends
that mean so much to me.

Victoria Coudray

Carpe Diem

These feelings swirl around me
like snowflakes in a storm,
and yet, they melt so quickly;
There's only anger to keep me warm.

My tears fall like raindrops
rolling through the downpour.
The pain inside just never stops
and I wonder what life is for.

I'm lost deep within me
where no one has ever gone
searching for a road to safety,
my directions are all wrong.

And when there's nothing left inside
my dreams faded all to grey,
I'll leave here knowing that I tried;
But could never seize the day.

Brenda Mason

Lonnie

Mama and my new step-father, Clarence (he's the third one this year) are in the bed-room arguing. Their voices rattle me from my dreams, dreams where kids are never beaten, where kids' mistakes are never so bad that a sorry or two won't mend them.

I sit up in bed and look over at Lonnie. He hasn't moved. This always amazes me--and I always wonder--is he faking. And if not--does he care. Lonnie's my big brother, which means I listen to him and sometimes get into trouble because of it--though, he usually gets the working over. No, not by Clarence, not by any of Mama's men, but by her.

The worst I'll get is a yelling at--what Mama calls a "tongue lashing." She beats Lonnie, stopping only after someone in the building phones the Police or BCW. She stops just long enough to make him take a bath, waits for him to get inside the tub, then holds his head under the water. Through all of this Lonnie never cries. I never saw him cry. He told me that he couldn't, that he had forgotten how. I told him that I hadn't, and that I would do it for him. He laughed. I love him.

Mama and Clarence have left their bed-room. So I get up, and crack the door, listening to their voices fade down the hall to the front door. Their arguing worries me, not because I think Clarence might harm Mama--She's pretty good at picking the kind of men who would rather leave her than harm her--but because these are the times, when she's having a fight with her man and he walks out, that Lonnie usually gets it.

I step back inside and close the door. Lonnie's sitting up in bed, smiling. He says, "It's quiet."

"Think he killed her," I say.

"More likely she killed him if you ask me."

Laughing, I go over to his bed. And for a moment, just a moment, I forget how scared I am. Lonnie's fifteen. I'm ten. He's grown so in the last year that his legs hang over his bed, like black ropes. He's way taller than Mama. But he says height doesn't matter much, because she hits just as hard swinging up as she did swinging down.

Lonnie kicks out from under his covers, stretching his skinny muscles like a cat. Then he jumps up, goes to the window, and opens the blinds, letting in the light that shoots through, blinding me.

"What you do that for?" I scream, rubbing my eyes.

"Something I want to show you," he says. He turns his back to me--and as I get closer I see a bunch of scratches--long and purple. At first I think Mamma must have done this. But then Lonnie smiles, and I know it's not her. "Lori Ann," he says--his smile growing into a giggle.

"What about her?" I ask. Then I get it. "No, no you didn't," I tell him.

"Quiet, Jimmy," he says, shaking his fist at me.

"OK, OK--where?"

"At her house last night; she got her own place now, with her kid."

"But she's a woman."

"Twenty-two."

"That's old."

"Yeah, but she sure didn't feel old, Jimmy. She didn't feel old at all."

"What is it like?"

"What?"

I grin. "You know."

"Hard to say."

"What's so hard about it?"

Lonnie starts to say something, then looks over at the door. So I go over to it, listen, and when I don't hear anything, I wave okay to him.

"Well," he says, "It's not what you think--not dirty or anything."

"Did it hurt?"

"No!"

"The scratches--your back."

"Not when I got them."

"How long did it last?"

"Not long--Lori Ann said it was because it was my first time and--damn!

Jimmy," he says, "you're really something--know that?"

I start to tell him, you showed me your back, remember. I didn't ask to see it. But I don't tell him. I don't tell him anything.

"Anyway," he says, "Mostly we talked. Well, I talked. She listened. I told her things I ain't never told nobody."

"About Mama?"

"Yeah, but that's not what you want to hear."

So he tells me what I want to hear: how he met Lori Ann at the grocery store, how he helped her home with her bags, how she asked him to stay for dinner, how she asked him to stay the night, how he snuck in the house this morning, and how good she felt. And as he tells me, he's getting excited. I'm getting excited too.

"Boy, I wish that was me," I say, as he finishes.

Lonnie laughs again, but this time I don't like it.

"What's so funny?" I ask.

"You, little brother," he says, grabbing my shorts.

I scream. But I don't mean to. Not so loud. Now there's running. Mama.

"Damn! Jimmy," he says, backing against the wall.

I don't say anything. I put my head down; and when I look up, Mama's standing in the middle of the room. (Mama's very dark and skinny, like Lonnie, only much shorter; she's always calling him black this or ugly that, but he looks just like her.)

"What's all the noise for?" Mama asks--and not waiting for an answer--looks at me and says, "Why you screaming, boy? What's he done to you?"

"Nothing, Mama," I tell her. "We're playing." I smile at her, but she doesn't see it; she's too busy staring at Lonnie, who's staring at a roach at his feet.

"Playing," she says, "Yeah, right. Come here, Lonnie!" she says, pointing to the spot right in front of her. He doesn't move. "Now!" she tells him. And when he still doesn't move, she rolls her eyes at him, and rolls her hands into fists. So I rise instead.

"Not you, fool," Mama yells at me.

"But, Mama," I say--"We were--"

"Shut up," she says.

Now Lonnie goes to her. She turns him around. She looks at his back. She touches it. She smiles. And when she smiles, I feel something twist inside my stomach.

"What's this?" she asks, pinching him.

He shrugs and pulls away from her.

I close my eyes, but I can't keep them closed. I open them, just as she hits Lonnie in his mouth. And I'm screaming, screaming at her to stop, screaming as his lip splits and blood runs out of it all down his chin--screaming till I can't hear myself, till Lonnie falls on the floor and rolls up into a ball--silent and shivering.

And Mama's telling him that he's no good, that she heard him sneaking in this morning, and that next time she will kill him.

"Do you hear me?" she tell him, kicking him in his side.

He shakes his head, yes.

Now Clarence, our new step-father comes into the room. And for a moment, just a moment, he looks as if he might help Lonnie. He takes a step forward toward them; then Mama turns from Lonnie to Clarence--her fists so tight that her nails cut into her palms. Clarence looks at Lonnie balled up in the corner. The he looks at Mama, at the blood on her hands, at her eyes that seem to swell and swallow his. Then he turns and leaves the room--not once looking back.

Mama's standing over Lonnie, breathing hard. She's looking at her fingernails; three of them are broken, and the middle nail on her right hand is bleeding. Now she's looking down at him, as if she's going to hit him again. So I run over to him, and spread my body over his. Lonnie's not crying, but he's moaning. He reaches up to me, pulling me down onto him. And his blood is all over me. I look up at Mama. I want to hurt her. I want to hurt her bad.

She looks at me and begins to shake (maybe she sees the anger in my eyes), and then she leaves the room, staring down at her nails.

When the Police come, Lonnie stays inside the room. Mama tells them I was the one crying. This is true alright, because Lonnie didn't cry. The Policemen look under my clothes and when they don't find any marks they leave. They don't even check the other rooms. And I should have told them, told them everything, but I was scared.

Whenever Mama beats Lonnie, afterwards, she always goes to the store and buys him a chocolate cake or chocolate-chip cookies. Lonnie loves chocolate, loves it more than anything, except, maybe girls. But tonight, for the first time, he refuses to eat. He doesn't eat dinner, either. Instead, he climbs into his bed and stares at the ceiling.

Later, I dreamed that Lonnie's stabbing Mama, with one of the knives that hang over the kitchen sink, but he's the one who's dying. And he's screaming at her: "Why, Mama, why, why, why, why, why, Mama, Why?" And as I wake, soggy and shaky, he's standing over me. I try to scream, but he puts his hand over my mouth. Scared, I struggle, but he holds me tight. And I'm about to pee on myself when he whispers in my ear, "Jimmy, cut it out and I'll let you up."

I stop; so does he. He cuts on the lamp. He's smiling, smiling through his fat

lip; and the left side of his face is purple and swollen and shiny. He says, "Sorry I woke you up, Pal. I wasn't going to wake you, but--" He sits down on my bed, and I move over to give him room. I rub my eyes, then wipe off the spit that has run down my chin.

"But what?" I ask.

He looks away and then says, "I'm cutting out."

I don't say anything.

"If I stay," he says, "I might have to hurt her, or Clarence if he gets in my way. I'm too big for this crap, Jimmy. I know I'm not a man, but I'm not a kid anymore either . . . Hear what I'm saying?"

I nod.

"I don't know if you'll understand what I'm about to say. I'm not sure I understand it myself. But something happened to me last night, at Lori Ann's . . . I cried Jimmy--like a freaking baby. And all the time Lori was holding me. And you know what--you know what, man? For a moment I forgot where I was, forgot who I was with--thought Lori was Mama--Mama for Christsakes--what a joke, what a freaking joke."

Now he's quiet, except for his breath, which is loud, like he's been running. And he looks funny, and his eyes are watery, and I'm getting scared. So I whisper, "Lonnie."

He smiles. "I'm OK, Pal," he says. "But I'll be even better soon as I get the hell out of here."

"Take me with you," I tell him, knowing that he can't--still. . .

"Then what," he says.

"Well."

"Well, nothing. Been watching too many movies, Pal; who's gonna feed you, clothe you, put a roof over your head--huh, who? Besides, things ain't so bad for you."

I put my head down.

Lonnie starts to say something else--chokes and spits some blood into a tissue.

"Are you OK?" I ask.

"No." He takes a deep breath, then spits again and says, "But like I said, I'll be better soon."

"But why is Mama--?"

"The way she is--who knows. All I know, Jimmy, is that I can't remember a time when she seemed happy, can't remember a time when she was nice to me, can't remember a time when she touched me and it didn't hurt. But there must have been a time, Jimmy; she must have been happy once. Anyway, she seems to like you." His voice drops. "Might even love you. And Clarence ain't so bad."

"He's a punk."

"Jimmy!"

"A Goddamn punk."

He holds his mouth to keep from laughing so hard. He says, "Who wouldn't be next to her." Then he stops laughing and for a moment or two there are only the sounds of our breaths. Now he starts to go.

"Wait," I tell him, "She might see you."

"So?"

"Let me go check."

"What difference does it make? What can she do to me now?"

"Plenty," I say. "Wait. I'll be back." Mama's bedroom is right next to ours; she's got a real noisy bed, though it's not as noisy as Clarence. And as I pass, I don't hear Mama--never do; it's as if he's in there by himself, which is how I used to feel, when I was younger, whenever she help me; like I was sitting on a lap, just a lap with no "body" attached to it.

Back inside the room, I tell him that it's safe.

"See you, Pal," he says, and gives me the first hug I ever remember him giving. "I'll call or write or something," he says.

I rub my eyes. He rubs his, then opens the door, and disappears into the night.

Now, back inside my room, I climb into Lonnie's bed. The bottom sheet is pulled half-way down the mattress, but I don't fix it. I just climb in, folding the covers over me. Lonnie's spot is warm and sweaty and there's another smell, too--perfume--must have rubbed off Lori on Lonnie on the bed now on me . . . Boy, she smells good.

I lay there. And for a moment I wonder whether I'll be getting the beatings now. I didn't tell Lonnie--but I heard Mama telling Clarence yesterday that she's pregnant. But I won't dwell on this now. Soon the sun will be up, and they'll start with their questions, and Lord knows what else.

I close my eyes and relive Lonnie's story. And I can't wait till I'm big enough, big enough to leave this place, big enough for my feet to hang over the bed, big enough to have scratches purple themselves across my back--and have someone like Lori Ann to put them there.

I press myself deep into Lonnie's spot and feel, or think I feel, what he must have felt when he held someone that could hold him back and mean it. I'm drifting off, but first I'll take a breath, the deepest breath of all . . . God she smells good . . . that Lori Ann.

Orlando Warren

Mo(u)rning

You and I stand
soaking in the soothing sun,
relishing the sounds of the relentlessly rolling waves
against the shore.

I close my eyes to capture this moment.
Turning from you I gaze upon the
lifting, dissipating clouds over
the cavernous mountain.

When I return to you,
there is no sea, no sun
and no you.
Yet I am not alone.

Kathleen M. Jones



Looking Home-Staten Island Ferry *Chris Kozlowski*

Aquel Cielo

Al apagar la luz de mi lamparita
y cerrar la cortina de mi ventana,
el techo se ilumina
de puntitos verdosos, brillantes...
Al arroparme en mis sabanas,
contemplo hacia el cielo de mi cámara:
no hay constelación alguna...
Hacia mucho tiempo que no contemplaba
el cielo en el cual apuntaba
mi telescopio;
aquel cielo en el cual los ángeles juegan,
las estrellas viajen y Dios existe...
Aquel cielo quizá no sea el límite.
No soy cosmonauta, ni astrónomo:
tan solo soy una persona común y corriente
que quiere emprender una aventura colombina.
Mas ahora, tan solo puedo mirar hacia mi meta
de lejos...

Aún hoy piso tierra.

Suzannette Lebrón

Sherris&Pipe Tobacco

I've been told
that cars are
no longer luxuries
they are a necessity.
I have to get a new
car. I've been dreaming
about a new queen size
bed, ultra firm mattress,
but I don't mind sleeping
on the floor.
And there is a beautiful
Ebony piano that the warmed
face English fellow who
wears the fragrance of
quality sherris and pipe
tobacco wants to sell me.
I am going to buy the
piano.

Renee Vaughn

Searching

In love with
a ghostly figure
that haunts my dreams.

A person that exists
only within the confines
of my mind and the realm
of my imagination.

I call out his name
but my words fall
on deaf ears.

I search him out
in a crowd but he
is blind to my gaze.

I reach out to touch him
but his shape is as
elusive as a butterfly.

I continue searching but
it seems that he does not
want to be found.

My energy is exhausted
and my patience is
wearing thin.

What will it take to
open his eyes to the
wonders of love?

Patti Devlin

The Magic of Education

Tis a face not sad on the corners,
A mind so busy at work.
Plunging on in spite of life,
In spite of pain or hurt.

Tis a smile of growth a shining,
Moving aside from poverty and shame.
Reading books to gain more knowledge
Moving ahead from the welfare game.

Tis a mother, a woman, a daughter,
Tis a father, a man, a son,
Tis a body, a graduation,
Tis a battle on its way to be won.

The magic of education.
Tis the magic of education,
Is the magic of education...
Thank God it is there for us all.

Veronica Pearcey

Fear

Not so much ghosts and goblins,
But more
The discovery that reality is
Different than you had pictured it.
Not so much a lump in the throat
Or a knot in the stomach,
But more
A scattering of everything you
Once were.
More like a heavy glass snowdome
That has been picked up from
its resting place on the mantle,
Shaken vigorously,
And then set back.
More like the flakes;
Swirling, frenzied, caught up in a whirlpool,
Then slowly drifting back into place.
But not the Right Place.
Never again the Right Place.
Never again the same.

Laura Hudson

Deep

This dark is deep, you can find it only in your dreams.
This love is sweet, it haunts you night and day it seems.
This cry is silent, it is heard by ancient souls.
This touch is soft, it warms the bones through bitter cold.
This sin is deadly, it digs in trying not to scream. . .
This dark is deep, you can find it only in your dreams.

Arva Q. Blackwood



Untitled *Emily Gauthier*

The Sweet Harbor

A heavy grey mist
engulfs the salty tears.
The light breaks through
the hovering dimness and
eerie tranquility.
Shadows. . .
So many shadows
and silhouettes
scattered amidst
the barren foreground.
The silence is deafening -
an occasional moan
from the gliding swans.
A mirror smothered
by the intense air.
The star at the harbor
illuminating the abandoned boats,
the deserted memories.

Susanne Dwyer

10/10/10

10/10/10

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